

Article 52

To consider
whether to change the
Acton Planning Board to be
“elected” instead of
“appointed”

Article 52 # Amend Town Charter – Elected Planning Board Members
(Two-thirds vote)

To see if the Town will vote to amend Section 2-1 “Elected Officials” of the Acton Charter by adding the following line to the table in that section:

	NUMBER OF MEMBERS	LENGTH OF TERM (YEARS)
Planning Board	5	5

And further to amend Section 4-2 “Appointment Powers, Selectmen” of the Charter of the Town of Acton, by deleting the Planning Board from this Section.

Summary

In order to become effective, this question, if passed by this Town Meeting, will also appear on and must be approved by ballot at the 2023 Annual Town Election.

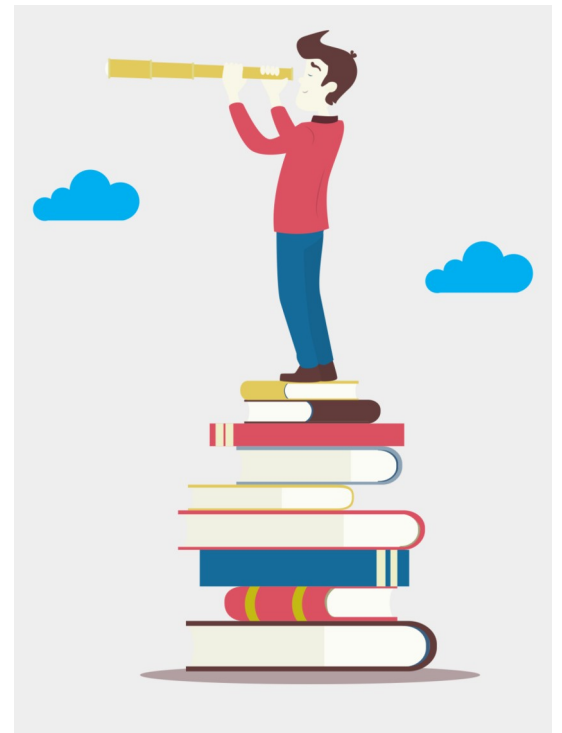
Responsibilities of Planning Boards:

Study the resources/needs of the Town,
particularly public welfare/safety related to
land use

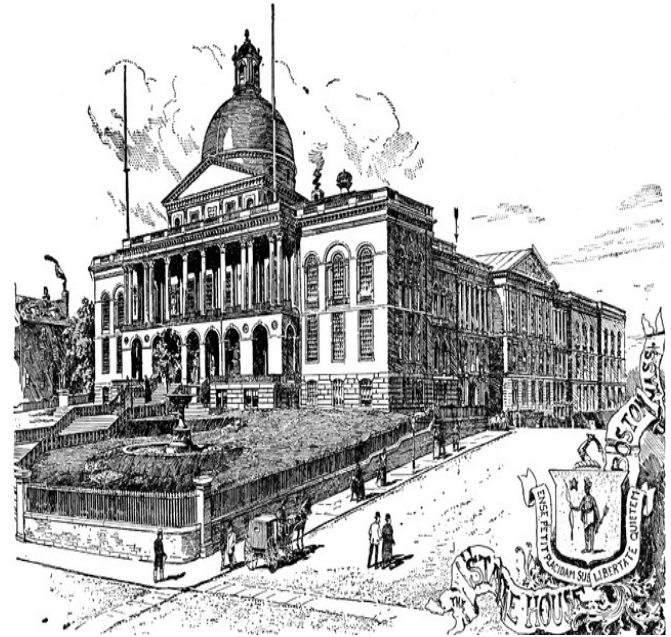
Follow the Master Plan and make
recommendations for controlling development

Oversee subdivisions and special permits to
ensure they meet the goals in the Master Plan.

Write zoning bylaws and propose changes to the
Town's Zoning Bylaw



Planning Boards “adjudicate on” [approve/deny] developer permits for new construction



In addition, Mass General Laws (MGL) call for the Planning Board to:

“make careful studies and when necessary prepare plans of the resources, possibilities and needs of the city or town”

The Acton Master Plan
calls for Acton to:

“...maximize open space
and minimize developed
land,...”



The Acton Climate Emergency Declaration calls for Acton to:

“...protect trees, forests, and other open spaces because of their ability to draw carbon out of the atmosphere and store it...”



An Elected Planning Board will serve the people of Acton better by:

- Increasing the diversity of opinions
- Increasing the pool of expertise
- Making it directly accountable to the voters



Diversity

An Elected Planning Board will result in a larger Pool of Candidates

It is imperative to attract qualified Elected Planning board members



Although it is difficult to attract volunteers for any given Board or Committee, we believe that removing the appointment authority will attract a larger pool of candidates

An Elected Planning Board will increase the breadth of expertise



- Allowing anyone who gets the signatures to get on the ballot increases the number of candidates, because the process is more direct
- Elected Planning Boards have more professionally skilled members, and that no Planning Board vacancy has gone unfilled.
- Acton, on the other hand, has a hard time getting qualified volunteers to go through the appointment process successfully

Accountability



The Ipswich study indicated that there is a perception that an appointed planning board represents the views of the appointing authority.

With an Elected Planning Board you move control over to the Acton voter's hands.

This is especially important when the Planning Board is adjudicating over developer applications that may impact neighbors, who will help decide future Planning Board elections

The Planning Board could be using local law to:

- reduce the amount of land destroyed*
- minimize the burden on town infrastructure
- ensure environmental justice/affordability
- reduce the carbon impact of new building
- protect
 - **water**
 - **bio-diversity**
 - **historical/archaeological relics**
 - **built and natural environment**



*Acton loses 40-50 acres a year, some years much much more, while housing insecurity increases.

In summary, what does an Elected Planning offer?

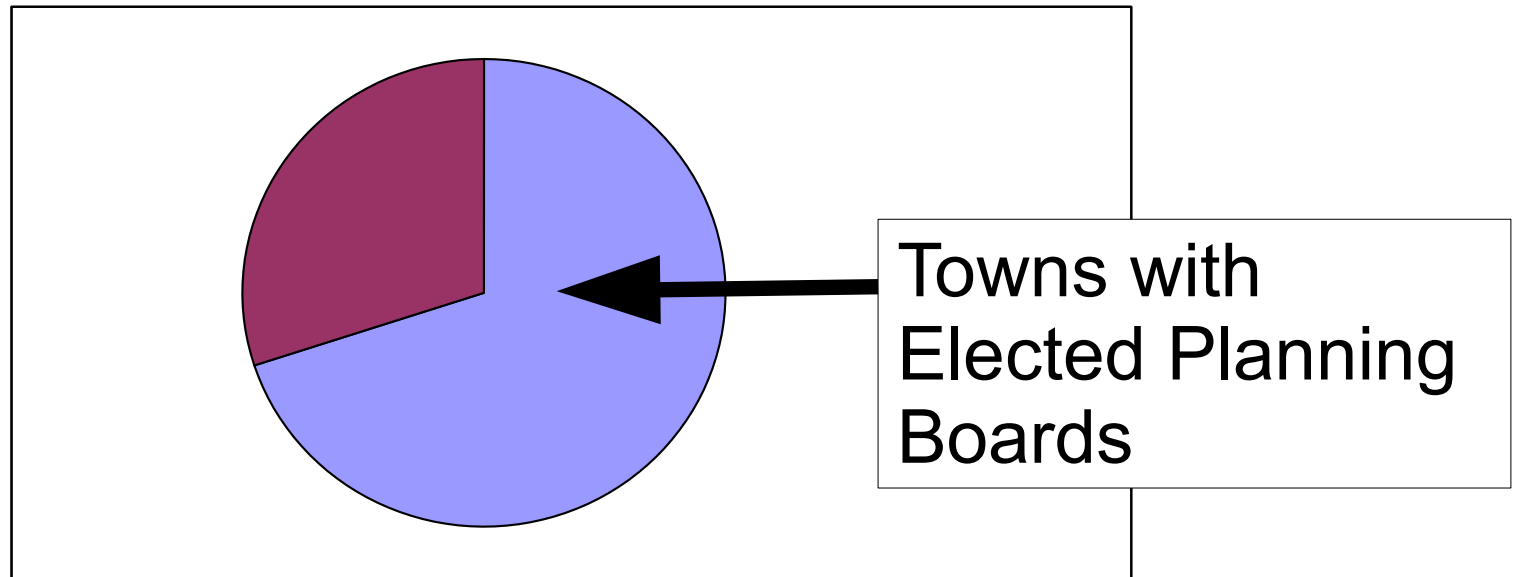
- More diversity
- More accountability
- New ideas. New expertise.



- During the election Planning Board candidates have to put forth their positions on key issues before they get on the Board!

Elected Planning Boards are not a radical idea...

“According to a 2018 survey by MA planners, of the 146 cities and towns that have Town Planners, 70 percent have elected Planning Boards; 30 percent have appointed Planning Boards.” *source: Town of Ipswich*



Vote YES!

for an

***ELECTED* PLANNING BOARD!**

